



## 2015 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 84

January 22, 2016 – Introduced by Senators L. TAYLOR, HARRIS DODD, C. LARSON, RINGHAND, RISSER and SHILLING, cosponsored by Representatives YOUNG, JOHNSON, BARNES, BERCEAU, BROSTOFF, DANOU, GENRICH, GOYKE, HEBL, HINTZ, HORLACHER, JORGENSEN, KESSLER, MACCO, MASON, MILROY, MURPHY, OHNSTAD, POPE, SHANKLAND, SINICKI, SUBECK, C. TAYLOR, ZAMARRIPA, ZEPNICK and BOWEN. Referred to Committee on Senate Organization.

1     **Relating to:** proclaiming February 2016 as Black History Month.

2             Whereas, Americans have recognized black history annually since 1926, first  
3     as “Negro History Week” and later as “Black History Month”; and

4             Whereas, we are commemorating the 51st anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights  
5     Act, which drew from many African Americans taking a positive stance on breaking  
6     down the barriers to racial equality; and

7             Whereas, African Americans in Wisconsin have made and continue to make  
8     outstanding contributions to our communities, and it is important to recognize the  
9     work of these leaders to combat negative stereotypes; and

10            Whereas, Ezekiel Gillespie, born in Tennessee as a slave, purchased his  
11     freedom to go north; Ezekiel sold groceries and operated a local branch of the  
12     Underground Railroad, helping hundreds of African Americans escape slavery; and

13            Whereas, Ezekiel Gillespie tied faith to the African-American community; he  
14     helped open Wisconsin’s first black church; and

1           Whereas, Ezekiel Gillespie also led the charge for African-American suffrage  
2 when, in 1865, Ezekiel attempted to vote and was denied a ballot, and Ezekiel went  
3 on to sue for his right to vote in *Gillespie v. Palmer*, which led to the Wisconsin  
4 Supreme Court enforcing the 1849 referendum in favor of African-American male  
5 suffrage; and

6           Whereas, Clayborn Benson, a native of Milwaukee, faced many challenges as  
7 an impoverished youth of color; he graduated from the old West Division High School  
8 despite being labeled “learning disabled;” he became the founder and executive  
9 director of the Black Historical Society and Museum, which documents and  
10 preserves the historical heritage of people of African descent in Wisconsin; and

11           Whereas, James Hightower III, on June 15, 2013, at the age of 12, became the  
12 youngest African American in American history to earn the honor of Eagle Scout,  
13 scouting’s highest honor; James Hightower III, for his Eagle Scout service project,  
14 rebuilt six bleachers at the three baseball fields of Kletzsch Park and led recruitment  
15 and fundraising efforts for this massive undertaking that enriched the Glendale and  
16 Milwaukee communities; and

17           Whereas, James Hightower III is an inspiration for children and adults in  
18 Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin for his commitment to bettering communities;  
19 and

20           Whereas, many African Americans have served in the legislature, including  
21 former senators Spencer Coggs, Gary George, Gwendolynne Moore, and Monroe  
22 Swan and former representatives Lloyd Barbee, Cecil B. Brown Jr., Elizabeth Coggs,  
23 Marcia P. Coggs, Isaac Coggs, Jason Fields, Tamara Grigsby, Raymond Lee Lathan,  
24 Johnnie Morris-Tatum, Lucien Palmer, Antonio Riley, Le Roy Simmons, Walton  
25 Bryan Stewart, Barbara Toles, and Robert Turner; and

